Respect and the 3rd Person in a Multilingual Perspective

Susanne Jekat / Christiane Hohenstein (Winterthur)

Research on politeness has been proliferating for nearly four decades now, drawing on cross-linguistic data from a wide range of spoken and written languages and focusing on pragmatic, syntactic and grammatical features. Speech acts such as apologies and requests have been investigated as well as grammatical, i.e. morphological, morphosyntactic, and lexical forms of honorific systems, expressions of politeness, respect and disrespect. However, while discussions and research centering on the notion of face have been exceptionally numerous, the grammatical category of respect has not yet received as much attention, since Haase (1994), with the exception of Simon (2003). The present collection on "Respect and the 3rd person: Cross-linguistic Perspectives on Respect and Politeness" originated in the discussions in our panel at the DGfS annual meeting in 2009 on "Forms of expressing politeness / respect in discourse: Talking about a third party in different languages and varieties". The articles comprising this volume strive to expand our insights into the complex intersection between grammatical respect (i.e. linguistic features in morphology and/or morphosyntax), lexical expressions and discourse phenomena of politeness cross-linguistically, with special regard to the treatment of third-person non-participants and bystanders. Our aim is to shed new light on respect and politeness phenomena as well as on the relation between respect as a systematic category on the one hand and politeness as an outcome of linguistic interaction on the other.

While all languages provide means to distinguish systematically between speaker and hearer, we find widely varying systems of polite address and respect in the world's languages. Great variety can be seen between distributions of genuinely grammatical, morphological features and periphrastic or lexical, referring expressions with regard to first and second persons. The third person, not being an immediate participant in the speech situation, is treated differently altogether: We find linguistic systems that relate the third person to the speech situation or to either hearer or speaker in the speech situation, as can be seen in Japanese (see below, (iv)). By contrast, in languages like English or German, the third person is treated systematically as a discrete part of the narrated discourse. While English features one of the most reduced respect systems, differentiating only between first person singular and plural on the one hand and a generalized second-person *you* used for both singular and plural as well as formal and informal address on the other, East Asian languages such as Javanese, Thai and Japanese feature elaborate linguistic systems of respect and linguistic politeness. Different levels of formality as well as social roles in the speech situation are reflected by distinct lexical expressions and honorifics as well as morphologically marked passives and causatives (for Japanese, see (iii) and (iv) below, cf. Shibatani 1999, Geyer 2008, Wetzel 2004). As an example comparing English, German and Japanese, we take a typical utterance that service staff might use to urge a customer to take their time:

(i) Please take **your** time.
PRT-pol V **2-PSS** N

(ii) Lassen **Sie** **sich** ruhig Zeit.
V **2-pol** **RFL** ADV N
'Let yourself have some time.'

(iiia) **Go-**yukkuri **o**-kutsuragi **kudasa**i.

HON-N(slow) **HON-**N(submission) **V-pol**-IMP(hand down to me)

'Take your time and make yourself comfortable.'

(iiib) **Go-**yukkuri shite **kudasa**i.

HON-N(slow) V-CON(do) **V-pol**-IMP(hand down to me)

'Take your time please.'

Compare the following example for third person respect and politeness phenomena in Japanese:

(iv) De K.-**sensei** wa, kon'nendo kara **o**-hairi **ni narare**ta

PRT Name-**title** TOP N(this year) from **HON-N**(enter) **PRT V(become)-PAS**-PT

to iu katachi **desu**.

COMP N **V-pol**

'And Professor K has joined from this year on'. (Example taken from the JaDEx corpus of German and Japanese discourse data, academic presentation no. A1_0517+,1_000308_190255_KHKT)'

Glossing: ADV= adverb; COMP= complementizer construction; CON= converb; HON= honorific prefix; IMP= imperative; PAS= passive; PL= plural; pol= polite form; PSS= possessive; PRT= particle; PT= past/perfect; RFL= reflexive; TOP= topic particle; V= verb; 2= second person/hearer deictic; N=noun; (expression in brackets)= lexical meaning

All of the examples (i) through (iv) constitute polite speech acts, but are fairly different in grammatical, lexical and pragmatic means involved: In both the English example (i) and the German example (ii) the predicates denoting the adressed hearer's action are infinitives morphologically; they are interpreted as imperatives pragmatically and by syntactic arrangement. By contrast, Japanese, in examples (iiia) and (iiib) employs a morphological imperative form (*-i*) with a verb denoting an action of giving and receiving. The action to be carried out by the adressee/hearer is construed as an act of passing down a favor on behalf of the speaker. In the Japanese examples we do not find expressions for either hearer or speaker; instead, referent honorifics (*go-*, *o-*) mark nouns referring to actions undertaken by the hearer, while the polite directional verb of receiving, *kudasaru*, in imperative form denotes the direction of the action towards and on behalf of the speaker. It is thus not the hearer simply taking his or her time, but making a gift to the speaker by taking his or her own time. The very meaning of the verb *kudasaru*, i. e. 'handing down sth. on behalf of the speaker' makes that verb part and parcel of the linguistic politeness system in Japanese.

However, does this qualify the verb as a linguistic means of respect in the sense of a grammatical category? The case for instances of respect may be much clearer with regard to the honorific prefixes *go-* and *o-*, both of which are morphologically realised forms and most typically indicate agreement with the second person in the speech situation. Moreover, in Japanese referent honorifics are also used to mark nouns associated with third parties, thus distinguishing not only between first and second person in the speech situation, but relating politely to the third person as well.

Example (iv) illustrates this kind of use of the honorific for a third person: Professor K., politely referred to by his name and title, is not an addressee of the utterance, but his action of entering the research group of the speaker is refered to by a complex politeness form involving the honorific *o-*. The specific predicate used in (iv) to denote respectful politeness

towards a third person makes use not only of the honorific but of a nominalised verb form (*hairi*, 'enter') in a passive construction using the become-verb (*naru*) and a morphological passive (*-are-*) at the same time. The third person's action thus is expressed as if Professor K. did not actively enter the group but had it happening to him. The pragmatic effect of these combined means is that the speaker sets himself in a personal relation to the third person, Professor K., without verbalising a speaker or hearer deictic, independent of the speech situation.

Comparing examples (i) – (iv) illustrates how an elaborate linguistic system of respect and politeness, as found in Japanese, reflects on the treatment of third person narrative as well. Whereas a lack of grammatical categories of respect, as is the case in English and German, is reflected in linguistically and culturally specific functionalisations of lexical expressions. This can be seen in the language specific ways the verbs are used in examples (i) and (ii). The English verb *take* used in example (i) denotes an action the addressee/hearer is urged to carry out which refers to an act of appropriation on his/her part. It presupposes a notion of time as an object of appropriation. Politeness in the English example (i) is expressed by a combination of the particle *please*, the generic hearer deictic possessive *your*, and the transitive verb *take* with an accusative object, *time*.

The German example (ii) involves a different verb, *lassen* ('let be'), without polite particle, that has a causative meaning: the action denoted is not an active part to be carried out by the hearer, politely addressed as *Sie* ('you'), but an act of becoming endowed with time. The valency structure is expanded to take a dative object as well, which is formed by the reflexive *sich* ('yourself') and thus expresses an activity of granting permission that is both directed at and performed by the hearer. In (ii) the adverb *ruhig* ('quietly', 'slowly') further contributes to the polite meaning by referring to the mode of the self-directed action of the hearer. While the combination of causative and reciprocal reflexive is highly routinised in German, it is not specific to the expression of politeness. On the other hand, adverbial use of *ruhig* in combination with invitations or exhortations is highly typical of German politeness; still it does not qualify as a respect category, being a pragmatic functionalisation on the basis of lexical and morphosyntactic means. However, the nominal adjective *yukkuri* ('slowly') in Japanese is functionalised in quite a similar way.

These examples show that politeness intersects with respect as a category in combinations that are very diverse grammatically, morphologically, syntactically and lexically. One way to take a new look at the complex intersection between instances of the grammatical category of respect and the pragmatics of politeness is to focus on the treatment of third person participants in terms of respect and (im-)politeness.

The question of what can be considered a 'real' grammatical marker of respect is the starting point of Corbett's research question. In a typological comparison including some lesser-known languages, he tries to identify a criterion for a category of respect using grammatical agreement as an indicator. The existence or non-existence of a grammatically marked system of respect (as seen above in the Japanese examples) is a central condition on the procedures used to refer to third persons with regard to politeness.

Greville Corbett (University of Surrey, UK) asks in **Politeness as a feature: so important and so rare** why respect is a rare morphosyntactic feature alongside, and in comparison to, gender, person, number and case. The argument developed by Corbett aims at a better understanding of linguistic diversity and its consequences. He especially argues for a precise differentiation between seemingly morphosyntactic features of respect which turn out to be essentially expressives, that is additive in use and incremental in nature, as opposed to respect as a feature which is characterized by agreement. Thus, only a very small number of languages have actually developed a feature respect, while honorifics as a condition on other grammati-

cal features are much more widespread throughout the world's languages. As a possible explanation, Corbett suggests that politeness systems are relatively unstable over time and are influenced by historical changes in society. Moreover, respect as a feature readily intersects with the second person but will rarely or less readily be available for the range of possible third person expressions.

Elke Hentschel (Bern University) investigates the uses of kinship terms in addressing or referring to non-kin in various languages, including Serbian, Mandarin and German, in **All men become brothers: The use of kinship terms for non-related persons as a sign of respect or disrespect**. Her examples reveal differences between languages: in Chinese, for example, the use of kinship terms is always a signal of politeness, while in languages such as German it is mostly rude. In Serbian, kinship terms seem to have mixed connotations: although they are mostly neutral to polite, they can also be used with the opposite effect. Hentschel finds that these differences between languages could be linked to whether they belong to collectivist or individualist cultures, or cultures currently shifting to individualism. She also discovers that positive or negative connotations in kinship terms seem to reflect a gender bias and an age bias. Finally, Hentschel refers to Corbett's (2006) findings on animacy hierarchy in order to find a possible explanation why kinship terms are used to refer to non-kin at all.

In **Code-switching as appraisal resource in talking about third parties,** Nicole Baumgarten (University of Southern Denmark) and Inke Du Bois (University of Bremen) draw on the frameworks of positioning analysis (Lucius-Hoene/Deppermann 2004) and appraisal analysis (Martin/White 2005) in order to show how code-switching helps to instantiate third parties in discourse. In interviews with immigrants to and from Germany and the US, code-switching serves as a means to convey evaluations of third parties vis-à-vis their respective home and host cultures and languages. Employing the common language of the code-switch between interviewee and interviewer to create a shared basis of evaluating and validating allows interviewees to construct relations of alliance and distance between themselves, the interviewer and absent third parties being talked about. Moreover, Baumgarten and Du Bois hold that such instances of code-switching may be seen as a specific face-saving device fending off the potentially face-threatening impact of talking judgmentally about a third party. With regard to typological issues and reconnecting to Corbett's argument, both German and English are languages without those rare elaborate, specific honorific systems: positioning oneself in relation to a third party thus has to be done by other linguistic means than grammaticalized expressions. Applying code-switching to this task is, at the same time, in line with the narrative functions of the interview and creatively exploits the linguistic resources at hand within the interview situation and its systematic preconditions.

These articles shed some light on language-system-related, use-related and interactive forms of linguistically expressing respect and politeness with regard to third persons. It becomes clear that the connection between the linguistic system and language use on the one hand and the difference between respect as a category and politeness as a type of interaction phenomenon on the other hand require further detailed, empirical studies including typologically diverse languages. This collection of articles can therefore be understood as a starting point for further research into this field and offers, in concise form, new points of view in the discussion.

References:

Corbett, Greville G. (2006): *Agreement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geyer, Naomi (2008): *Discourse and Politeness. Ambivalent Face in Japanese*. London/New York: Continuum.

Haase, Martin (1994): *Respekt. Die Grammatikalisierung von Höflichkeit*.. München/Unterschleißheim/Newcastle: Lincom Europa. (= *Edition Linguistik* 3).

Lucius-Hoene, Gabriele/Deppermann, Arnulf (2004): "Narrative Identität und Positionierung. Gesprächsforschung". *Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion* 5: 166–183.

Martin, James R./White, Peter R. R. (2005): *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shibatani, Masayoshi (1999): "Honorifics". In: Brown, K./Miller, J.: *Concise Encyclopedia of Grammatical Categories*. Amsterdam, Elsevier: 192–201.

Simon, Horst (2003): *Für eine grammatische Kategorie 'Respekt' im Deutschen. Synchronie, Diachronie und Typologie der deutschen Anredepronomina*. Tübingen: Niemeyer. (= *Linguistische Arbeiten* 474).

Wetzel, Patricia J. (2004): *Keigo in Modern Japan: Polite language from Meiji to the present*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.